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President of the European Commission

**Introductory remarks at the press  
conference following the Tripartite  
Social Summit**

*Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Tripartite Social Summit

**Brussels, 25 March 2010**

The Tripartite Social Summit today has had a special importance: because it comes at a crucial point in time when EU leaders are about to agree on the design of the new Europe 2020 strategy: the strategy for the future of the European economy.

Today we have discussed the key policy orientations of the Europe 2020 strategy with the European social partners. I think I can say, on behalf of all of us, that there are some points where we have a strong consensus. I do not pretend that social partners agree on all issues, but certainly they agree on the need to

- have a sense of urgency in dealing with the current situation,
- reinforce the social dialogue to implement this strategy, and
- have growth at the centre of our strategy –but not any kind of growth, but a smart growth, inclusive social growth and also sustainable growth.

There were very important contributions for our next steps. I would like to thank especially President Zapatero for the way in which Spain is giving a contribution to the deepening of our common action, in terms of the strategy for the future of Europe.

The European Commission will not accept things getting back to "business as usual". We are still in a very difficult moment.

I believe that with our internal market, our single currency, the Euro, and in particular our social market economy we have a good basis to build on. I want to highlight the fact that social partners, both on the business side and the trade unions side, highlighted how important the stability of the Euro is for Europe, for businesses but also for the workers and for our economy in general. I think that is an important message considering the current debates.

For the Commission, creating jobs remains a number one priority.. We can not and must not let unemployment turn to long-term unemployment and social exclusion. We must also pay particular attention to facilitate the entry of young people to the labour market.

We are committed to more and better jobs and to a flexicurity approach to help this transition. I do not need to repeat it: flexicurity is both about flexibility and security.

The upgrading of skills will be a decisive factor in achieving higher levels of employment and matching the skills needs in various sectors in the future.

Finally, we will not accept new walls in Europe because of poverty and exclusion, and we are resolved to tear them down. That's why we want leaders to agree on a headline target to combat poverty.

We need the social partners on board to promote this reform agenda. We need their support and advice, sometimes their criticism, to ensure we deliver – EU and Member States alike. This is a very important point of the strategy: the governance of it. We will not succeed if it is only seen as a strategy from "Brussels". We will only succeed if it is a strategy shared among the European institutions, the member states, the social partners and all the stakeholders.

We are living a very special moment for Europe:

We cannot afford to fail. We cannot afford to abandon our social models. If we want to keep our European social models - and we are so proud of them, we should also be able to invest in competitiveness, invest in the reforms that give us the possibility to come back to growth and to avoid the negative consequences of this crisis. To have growth that it is also sustainable and inclusive.

Thank you.